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Peace Academy's Time Has Come, But Not Money

It's easy to get billions of dollars from Congress to wage war or prepare for it. But it is almost impossible to squeeze a few pennies out for peace.

For 28 years in the House and Senate, Democratic Sen. Jennings Randolph, a gentle soul from Elkins, W.Va., has been trying to establish a Peace Academy. It would train young Americans to promote peace, just as the three military academies prepare young Americans to fight when war breaks out.

It's an idea whose time has come—from sheer necessity. War has become unthinkable in the nuclear age, but it may become inevitable—unless we have the kind of skilled negotiators who can protect national interests without resort to military force.

As envisioned by Randolph and co-sponsor Sen. Spark M. Matsunaga (D-Hawaii), one-fourth of the Peace Academy's budget would go for grants to universities and other institutions for historical research on successful and unsuccessful peace negotiations of the past. This information would be gathered in a cen-

tral clearing-house. There is no such facility available now.

For example, anyone examining President Jimmy Carter's successful 1978 negotiations of the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt must dig through the National Archives and the participants' memoirs. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which might be expected to keep such background information, has none.

The Peace Academy's budget would be modest indeed by government standards: \$7.5 million for the academy's site, a \$6 million operating budget for fiscal 1984 and a \$10 million budget for 1985. The Pentagon spends more than this on a tank or airplane that often doesn't even work.

Critics of the Peace Academy proposal offered my associate Kathy McDonald some strangely contradictory arguments.

They complain that establishment of such an academy would be viewed by the Soviet Union and other nations as a sign of pacifist weakness. They also argue that foreign governments would cynically regard the academy as nothing more than a front for the CIA. Yet they also insist that the CIA be involved in the academy by law, or at least be permitted to be involved.

Meanwhile, the idea has acquired some dedicated supporters. They argue that a Peace Academy would

show a dubious world that the United States is serious about resolving international conflicts without resort to military might.

"Peacemaking is an instrument of power," former assistant secretary of state Harold Saunders told Congress, "because...it puts the United States on the side of the highest aspirations of mankind, and not just the pursuit of its own self-interest."

The White House, citing "severe budgetary constraints," has refused its support. Yet the Randolph-Matsunaga legislation has 53 co-sponsors in the Senate and more than 100 in the House.

Boondoggle of the Week—Never underestimate the power of a comic strip. "Ripley's Believe It or Not" had noted the loss a company could expect from employee theft. So the Right Away Foods Corp. of Texas negotiated \$412,000 for theft loss in a Pentagon contract to assemble combat-ration packages, even though its actual loss was only \$58,000. The difference was a whopping over-estimate of \$354,000.

The boondoggle didn't stop there. Overruns on the \$28 million contract totaled more than \$3.5 million. To make matters worse, the Pentagon could have bought the same amount of battle rations from another company for \$10 million less. Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) has asked Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger for an explanation.